

# Mass Dissent

Massachusetts Chapter

National Lawyers Guild

14 Beacon St., Boston, MA 02108

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## BOARD MEETING

**NOVEMBER 16, 5:30 pm**

14 Beacon St., 1st Fl.  
Boston

## OMG, The Religion Issue

A young Guild member mentioned his concern that the NLG and other politically progressive groups too often give the impression that the religious are not welcome. He worried that perhaps all communities of faith were being penalized for the damage done by the so-called Religious Right. We saw that as a useful reminder to highlight the good work of several local religious institutions and organizations. You might even say that it was the genesis of this issue.

The Guild has a long relationship with Community Church of Boston. On page 5, **Rev. Jason Lydon** describes the church's commitment to Liberation Theology and in particular, its work to support prisoners and abolish the prison industrial complex.

On page 6, **Rev. Bruce Greer** provides the unique perspective of a progressive Baptist Christian who is also a Ground Zero veteran. He writes that the endless cycle of violence can only be broken by "learning to live with competing meta-narratives, cultural and religious, economic and political."

Our own **Marguerite Helen** discusses basic Quaker principles on page 7 and how they are put into practice, work often done alongside the NLG.

**Anna Syed** describes the extraordinary gathering that occurred at the Islamic Society of Boston's Cultural Center when Gov. Patrick met with over 1,200 Muslims, who described their struggle for acceptance and inclusion. See page 8.

We close with an eloquent essay from **Sheila Decter**, page 9, on Judaism's mandate to pursue justice.

Moving to more secular topics, on page 10 Northeastern students **Stephanie Gharakhanian** and **Sharlyn Grace** give us their impressions of the recent NLG convention in New Orleans.

For those of you who weren't there, one of the highlights was seeing our chapter's fearless leader, **Ursula Masny-Latos**, being honored as Legal Worker of the Year. We have included her bio from the dinner program on page 11.

- Barb Dougan -

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***Join a Guild Committee***

**Street Law Clinic Project:** The Street Law Clinic project provides workshops for Massachusetts organizations that address legal needs of various communities. Legal education workshops on 4th Amendment Rights (Stop & Search), Landlord/Tenant Disputes, Workers' Rights, Civil Disobedience Defense, Bankruptcy Law, Foreclosure Prevention Law, and Immigration Law are held at community organizations, youth centers, labor unions, shelters, and pre-release centers. If you are a Guild attorney, law student, or legal worker interested in leading a workshop, please contact the project at 617-723-4330 or nlgmass-slc@igc.org.

**Lawyer Referral Service Panel (LRS):** Members of the panel provide legal services at reasonable rates. Referral Service Administrative/Oversight Committee members: Neil Berman, Neil Burns, Joshua Goldstein, Jeremy Robin, and Azizah Yasin. For more information, contact the Referral Service Coordinator at 617-227-7008 or nlgmass@igc.org.

**Foreclosure Prevention Task Force:** Created in June 2008, the Task Force's goal is threefold: (1) to draft and introduce policies that address issues that homeowners and tenants of foreclosed on houses face, (2) to provide legal assistance to these homeowners and tenants, and (3) to conduct legal clinics for them. If you are interested in working with the Task Force, please call the office at 617-227-7335.

**Independent Civilian Review Board:** In coalition with the American Friends Service Committee and Greater Boston Civil Rights Coalition, the NLG has been pushing for the creation of an independent civilian board to review complaints against Boston police officers. To get involved in the campaign, please contact the office at 617-227-7335.

**NLG National Immigration Project:** Works to defend and extend the human and civil rights of all immigrants, both documented and undocumented. The Committee works in coalition with community groups to organize support for immigrant rights in the face of right-wing political attacks. For more information contact the NLG National Immigration Project at 617-227-9727.

**NLG Military Law Task Force:** Provides legal advice and assistance to those in the military and to others, especially members of the GIRights Hotline, who are counseling military personnel on their rights. It also provides legal support and helps to find local legal referrals when needed. The MLTF and the Hotline exchange many questions and information through their listserves. For advice and information, GI's can call 877-447-4487. To get involved, please contact Neil Berman (njberman2@juno.com) or Marguerite Helen (mugsm@mindspring.com).

**COALITIONS:**

**Jobs with Justice**, a coalition-based organization addressing workers' rights. The NLG is a member of Jobs with Justice; any interested Guild members can attend meetings & events.

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# GUILD NEWS

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## NLG HAPPY HOUR

The Massachusetts Chapter's *NLG Presents... & Happy Hour* takes place on the **2nd Wednesday of every month, 5:30 - 8:00pm, at Kennedy's Mid-Town Pub** (44 Province St., 2nd Fl., Boston, close to Suffolk Law School). See below for the next event. Please join us.

## "KYR" TRAINING

The Mass Chapter and the ACLU will hold a "**Know Your Rights**" training for local activists to let them know what to do when FBI or other law enforcement agents "visit" our homes. The training will be on **Wednesday, November 3, 6:00-8:00 pm at Community Church, 565 Boylston St., Boston.** Spread the word.

## FBI - THEN & NOW

You are invited to an event sponsored by the Nat'l Police Accountability Project of NLG, NLG Mass. Chapter, and the ACLU of Mass. on "**The FBI and the Murder of a Black Panther**" with Michael Avery (NLG member), King Downing (NPAP), Jeff Haas, author of "The Assassination of Fred Hampton," and Geraldine Hines, (Superior Court Judge). The event will be on **Thursday, Nov. 18, 6:00-8:00 pm, at Northeastern School of Law, 250 Dockser Hall, Boston.**

## NLG HOLIDAY HOUR

Please come to the NLG holiday party: **Friday, Dec. 3, 5:30pm. Stern Shapiro Weissberg & Garin (90 Canal St.)**

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## Street Law Clinic Report

*The following Guild members conducted trainings for law students and/or clinics for members of Boston area community organizations and agencies:*

**October 6:** *Stop & Search* training at New England School of Law, by **Carl Williams.**

**October 8:** *Legal Observer* training for the One Nation Rally volunteers, by **Jeff Feuer.**

**October 13:** *Tenants' Rights* training at Northeastern University School of Law, by **Melinda Drew.**

**October 18:** *Workers' Rights* training at Boston University School of Law, by **Mark Stern.**

**October 19:** *Stop & Search* clinic at Cambridge Cares About Aids, by students **Matthew Schultz & Daniel Werner,** and lawyers **Hayne Barnwell & Ben Falkner.**

**October 20:** *Stop & Search* clinic at Cambridge Family and Children's Services, by students **Lauren Russell & Jonathan Westover,** and lawyer **Jeff Varszegi.**

**October 21:** *Tenants' Rights* clinic at Kennedy Center in Charlestown, by student **Rachel Smith** and lawyer **Neil Berman.**

### NLG Presents....

#### **SARAH FUHRO & COLE HARRISON**

#### **"Stopping the War in Afghanistan and Protecting Dissent at Home"**

**Wednesday, November 10, 2010**

**5:30 - 6:30 PM**

**Kennedy's Midtown**

**44 Province St., 2nd Fl., Boston**

**(next to Suffolk Law School, off Bromfield St.)**

**Cole Harrison,** convenor of the Afghanistan Task Force of United for Justice with Peace, and **Sarah Fuhro,** of Military Families Speak Out, will take stock of the war in Afghanistan, now entering its 10th year, and the state of the anti-war movement.

Cole Harrison will discuss the situation in Afghanistan and the anti-war movement in this country, where a majority of Americans want to end the war. Sarah Fuhro, whose son has served in both Iraq and Afghanistan, will talk about the powerful movement by military families to end the war.

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### ARTICLES FOR MASS DISSENT

The December issue of *Mass Dissent* will look at "The Guild in 2010".

If you are interested in submitting an article, essay, analysis, or art work (cartoons, pictures) related to the topic, please e-mail the articles to [nlgmass-director@igc.org](mailto:nlgmass-director@igc.org).

***The deadline for articles is November 15.***

## OCTOBER “NLG Presents...” & HAPPY HOUR

The October “NLG Presents...” hosted **NANCY KOHN** who talked about the Cuban Five case, the latest legal developments, and what could be done to bring justice for the five Cubans jailed in American prisons. The presentation was followed by a Happy Hour with great conversation and camaraderie. Here are some pictures from the event (more pictures at [www.nlgmass.org](http://www.nlgmass.org) and [facebook - www.facebook.com/home.php?#!/pages/National-Lawyers-Guild-Massachusetts-Chapter/126032100753847?ref=ts](https://www.facebook.com/home.php?#!/pages/National-Lawyers-Guild-Massachusetts-Chapter/126032100753847?ref=ts)).



(above) Attendees of the October “NLG Presents...” (Photo by Urszula Masny-Latos)  
 (right) Nancy Kohn leading a conversation on the Cuban Five. (Photo by Sara DeConde)

## NLG OCTOBER 2010 EVENTS

In October, the NLG Mass Chapter held very exiting events. On October 1, we collaborated with the Brattle Theater in Cambridge and premiered - to the sold out house! - Oliver Stone’s documentary “**South of the Border,**” with an NLG panel discussion moderated by **Iris Gomez**. On the panel we welcomed **Yana Garcia**, a 3rd year law student; **Mark Weisbrot**, co-writer of “South of the Border;” and **Gregory Wilpert**, consultant on the movie (right).



On October 6, we welcomed **NLG Mentorship Program** members and law students at a cocktail party, held at Revolution Rock Bar (below). What a great event!



Photos by Urszula Masny-Latos

# A Theology for Abolition or “We Shall Set the Captives Free”

by Rev. Jason Lydon

The Community Church of Boston (CCB), a Unitarian Universalist congregation, is one of many religious organizations working closely with prisoners in Massachusetts. Many of our members have loved ones currently in prison or have been incarcerated at some time themselves. Our commitment to incarcerated people is not only spiritual, it is a deep political commitment to abolishing the prison industrial complex and supporting prisoner led struggles in the meantime. We recently opened our membership to currently incarcerated people and have welcomed nearly a dozen people into the fold that way. We provide the prisoner membership with reflections from "free-world" members on the Sunday service, copies of the Sunday bulletin and prayer, monthly newsletters, and hope to establish a visiting program in the years to come. Prisoner members provide us with their reflections and their writings to inform us of those things most pressing to them inside the prison walls here in Massachusetts. We strive to nurture the relationship to be as mutual as possible. For those who will one day be released, we will welcome them into our "free-world" community.

Philosopher Josiah Royce suggested that, "the future task of religion is the task of inventing and applying arts which shall win men [sic] over to unity... Judge every social device, every proposed reform, every national and every local enterprise, by the one test: does this help towards the

coming of the universal community?" (Charles A. Howe, *Clarence Skinner: Prophet of a New Universalism*, 1998.) When one looks at the pervasive violence, oppression, and ineffectiveness of the prison industrial complex, it should not be very difficult to find an answer to whether the prison industrial complex is bringing the universal community closer or pushing it farther away. Skinner wrote in his own words, "All great social problems involve theological conceptions. We may divorce church from state, but we cannot separate the idea of God from the political life of the people." So then, what does God, or the divine as known by other names, have to say about the prison industrial complex?

I understand theology to exist, at its fullest potential, for the service of liberation. According to Gustavo Gutierrez, "Theology must be critical reflection on humankind, on basic human principles... Theological reflection would then necessarily be a criticism of society and the Church insofar as they are called and addressed by the Word of God; it would be a critical theory, worked out in the light of the Word accepted in faith and inspired by a practical purpose." (Gustavo Gutierrez, *A Theology of Liberation*, 1988.)

Because of the role of white supremacy in the prison industrial complex, people of color, and particularly Black people, are incarcerated at rates far beyond their representation in our national population. For any theology to be relevant to those working against the prison industrial complex, it must prioritize the experiences of Black people, women in particular, and the writings of

womanists and Black liberation theologians. The fundamental connecting point of all liberation theologies is the prioritization of the experience of the particular theologian's oppressed community as the subject of theological discourse, all of which have a role in shaping a theology relevant in the face of the prison industrial complex. This means that a theology for the abolitionist movement must be influenced by queers, ecofeminists, Black scholars, Indigenous organizers, Palestinian freedom fighters, transgender survivors, and all others struggling for liberation.

For those of us at the CCB, we know that the guiding principles of Unitarian Universalism push us towards the essential work of liberation. We know that those who are locked behind bars and walls are being prohibited from living to their greatest potential, and thus we all suffer because of that. Setting aside the many innocent people behind bars, none of us want to be judged by only the worst thing we have done in our lives. We as individuals are deeply complex and have endless gifts to give. The ministry of the CCB is to understand the gifts that people who are incarcerated have to give and be in relationship with them as we all work to overcome our deeply flawed humanity.

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*Rev. Jason Lydon is the minister of the Community Church of Boston and a passionate abolitionist organizer, especially focusing on the needs of queer and transgender prisoners.*

## To Live in Peace: A Baptist's Perspective

by Rev. Bruce A. Greer

In response to a Florida pastor's threat to burn the Koran and the debate about building an Islamic center near Ground Zero, I write as a progressive Baptist Christian, as well as a Ground Zero veteran. In 2001, I volunteered on the Rhode Island Critical Incident Stress Management (CISM) Team and as a local fire service chaplain, serving first responders after horrific incidents. By September 11, 2001, I had already witnessed enough trauma and tragedy. Since our CISM team was experienced and so close to New York City, we were among the first teams called to Ground Zero. Our instructions on 9/12 were blunt: get ready, call your loved ones, and update your funeral arrangements. Secondary attacks and unstable buildings remained an ominous threat.

As firefighters rested at Ground Zero in the days after 9/11, I encountered many responses, from lament to outrage, from blank stares to warm smiles. Walking the periphery of the "Pile" that was once the World Trade Center, taking in the scale of death and devastation, I wondered: what would be our response to this heinous act? Will we seek justice by means of diplomacy and global collaboration? Will we build cross-cultural relationships, economic equity and thoughtful foreign policy to enhance mutual trust and understanding? Sadly, "Shock and Awe" was the answer from our government, killing tens of thousands of civilians and

thousands of combatants, while leaving scars upon the minds and bodies of countless people. Such violence is endless, and timeless.

From the United States to Afghanistan, Iraq, Palestine, the Sudan and countless other places, we trace a trail of blood that leads to the edge of Eden where, according to ancient myth, Cain killed his brother, Abel. According to one of the brightest and best Baptists of our time, Bill Moyers, the First Murder came out of a religious dispute that led to violence and death. The pattern has since been played out through generations of conflict between Jews, Christians and Muslims, let alone among others, so much so that "...a red trail of

***Civil society requires more than maintaining order. It also requires cultivating freedom of conscience, freedom of expression, mutual respect, and social solidarity.***

religiously spilled blood runs directly from east of Eden...to every place in the world where the compassion of brothers and believers, of sisters and seekers, turns to competition and violence." (*Many Faiths, One Nation*, 55-56 in *Moyers on America*.)

According to America's first Baptist, Roger Williams, who established Providence in 1636, civil society requires more than maintaining order. It also requires cultivating "...freedom of conscience, freedom of expres-

sion, mutual respect, and social solidarity – values that support... the preservation of peace and an ethos in which its citizens might flourish." For Williams, civility and not orthodoxy was the chief virtue of a good society. (See James Calvin Davis, *The Moral Theology of Roger Williams*, 44-45). A Calvinist of painful proportions, Williams nevertheless presaged one of the primary tasks of our time: learning to live with competing meta-narratives, cultural and religious, economic and political. Burning someone else's holy book in the name of orthodoxy, or protesting a faith community's plan for peaceable assembly out of mistrust, undermines civil and democratic society, while perpetuating needless violence and senseless death.

When I met a Buddhist nun once at a conference, I told her that Baptists and Buddhists have at least four things in common. "What are they?" she asked. "The B, the L, the S and the I," I replied. She laughed and the conversation flowed from there. Trite, perhaps; but deeper truth is there for all of us. Freedom of conscience, freedom of expression, mutual respect and social solidarity are the corner-stones of civil society, and they each rest on what may well be the deepest human desire of all: to live in peace.

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*Rev. Bruce A. Greer is the Interim Senior Minister at the First Baptist Church in Newton.*

## Quaker Religion and Action

by Marguerite Helen

Quaker religion, long regarded as progressive, was founded on "religious values" that led Quakers to be known as the strongest and most actively involved people in causes such as prison reform, emancipation, and women's rights, even though the religion is small in numbers.

Many people mistakenly think Quakers are related to oats or Shakers. Many know truths: Mary Dyer, whose statue is in front of the Massachusetts State House, was hanged on the Common because of her Quaker beliefs; William Penn founded Pennsylvania to be a model of governance based on those beliefs. Quakers' core belief is that each person can communicate directly with god, however they describe or understand god, without any intermediary, such as a minister, or any prescribed beliefs, such as a creed. Their form of worship is to listen in silence in which they learn truths and are helped in living their lives. What is most important is not to talk about their beliefs but to try to act in accordance with them, guided by set of principles that include peace, equality, integrity, community, and service - all also bases for Guild work.

Quakers organize from the bottom up; individuals gather as congregations that then usually connect into a regional gathering of congregations which may approve a position on an issue but has no authority to require action on it. However, acts of conscience taken in conjunction with Quaker principles are approved even by Quakers who personally think that some action is illegal or pointless.

The "Peace Testimony" is embodied in most Quaker action. It comes from the belief that you cannot kill anyone because everyone has in them "that of god"; that core of communication. Quakers hold Good Friday peace vigils at Park Street and join other vigils, marches, and demonstrations, often helping prevent altercations and to be observers. Quakers lead, participate in, and help with matters related to civil disobedience. One 90+ year-old Friend, who has been arrested numerous times, was instrumental in closing the Vermont Yankee nuclear power plant. When a Quaker who, with others, vigiled regularly at Polaroid in Cambridge against its work on military equipment, was arrested for a sit-in there, he was assisted by other Quakers during his trial, incarceration, and writing about it. A number of Quakers withhold

income tax money that would pay for war; the congregation of one held a celebratory party for her and two members who disapproved of her action as unlawful yet still offered to help pay for any fines or interest she might incur. In New England there's a fund into which tax resisters may deposit what they withhold and into which contributions are made to help pay such fines and interest. Quakers oppose military recruiters at high schools, recruiting stations, and military display fairs. Quakers and the NLG work on the GI Rights Hotline, Military Law Task Force, and against "Don't Ask, Don't Tell."

Quakers have long been active against the death penalty and in prison work. Quakers have joined the National Religious Campaign Against Torture, which focuses on ending torture done or sponsored by the USA. Quakers boycott Israel. Quakers from New England have spent long periods of time in Palestine, including Gaza, and New England Quakers strongly supported the Gaza Freedom Flotillas. Quakers show deep friendship for LGBT's. In Boston, they testified at hearings concerning gay marriage (one plaintiff in the landmark lawsuit was a Quaker), are board members of Parents, Families & Friends of Lesbians & Gays, and form a proud contingent in the Gay Pride parade.

Quakers – religious, progressive allies with the NLG.

### CONGRATULATIONS TO NLG MEMBERS

**Nadine Cohen, Barb Dougan,  
Nancy Shilepsky, Eleanor Newhoff,  
Lisa Thurau-Gray, and Barbara Zimbel**  
on being recognized by *Lawyers Weekly* as  
Top Women of the Law!

*Marguerite Helen, a Quaker and a member of NLG-MA, works as a counselor on the GI Rights Hotline and with the Military Law Task Force.*

## Massachusetts Muslims Seek Social Justice

by Anna Syed

In Roxbury, at the corner of Columbus Avenue and Malcolm X Boulevard, there stands a building whose very address evokes its community's commitment to social justice. From exploration and discovery to education and engagement, the Cultural Center of the Islamic Society of Boston serves as a home for Boston's growing Muslim community. The Center, known locally as the ISBCC, provides many sorts of spaces to its visitors: it contains a cafe, in which they may nourish their bodies; it houses a shop, in which they may clothe themselves; it includes a prayer space, in which they may worship and it features a large event space, in which they may gather. It was within this space at the ISBCC last May that some 1200 Muslims from across the Commonwealth gathered in partnership with leaders of other faith communities to engage in dialog with Governor Deval Patrick. The event's participants brought to the Governor their stories of suffering and discrimination, their acutely felt needs, and their hopes for the future. They sought his promise to assist them in the pursuit of their civil rights, and cheered with joy as his pledges were received. From a promise to use a \$50,000 grant to increase sensitivity training for law enforcement officials, to a commitment to personally visit more Islamic centers, the Governor demonstrated to his audience

that they formed a valued component of his constituency.

A closer look at the forum's planning, execution and follow-up reveals the core ingredients of good community organizing which made this success possible. In the weeks leading up to the event, organizers met with hundreds of Muslims from across the Commonwealth to listen to their needs, and to work together to form the requests they would make of the Governor. Time and again, when asked about their struggles, these community representatives pinpointed the treatment of Muslims by law enforcement officials as a key problem. They also cited difficulties on behalf of their children concerning public schools, where a lack of awareness of Muslim customs too often creates feelings of isolation and hardship. They spoke of problems in soliciting permission from their employers to attend the obligatory Friday prayers, and of the painful attacks which they and their families have suffered. In response to these grievances, the leadership of the Greater

***When asked about their struggles, [Muslim] community representatives pinpointed the treatment of Muslims by law enforcement officials as a key problem.***

Boston Interfaith Organization, in partnership with the Muslim American Society and other Muslim community leaders forged a plan to ask the Governor, in person, for his help. Meeting with and generating support within the widest possible

swathe of the Muslim community ensured broad support for the event. Indeed, when the big day came, representatives of at least 25 different community groups (including 15 mosques) turned up in droves.

The faces of the crowd assembled at the forum spoke volumes of the richness of Massachusetts' large Muslim community. Men of all ages, boys and girls, immigrants and American-born citizens, women veiled and unveiled crowded together within the Center to hear and be heard. With eagerness, sincerity and hopefulness, they listened to one another. This provided another ingredient of the event's success: the possibility for community members to develop empathy for one another, to promote justice and to provide mutual support.

As the election season draws to a close, the Muslim community seeks the fulfillment of Governor Patrick's promises. While some have already been enacted, more remain. An upcoming meeting is planned with the state's gubernatorial candidates to reaffirm the Governor's commitments. The organizers of the Governor's forum in May hope that this will form the lynch pin of their success. By reminding the Governor publicly of his promises, they hope to highlight the need for his accountability to his Muslim constituents.

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*Anna Syed is an American born convert to Islam. She is pursuing a Master's degree in Library and Information Science at Simmons College. She lives in Roxbury with her husband and daughter.*

## Honoring the Ancient Covenant

by Sheila Decter

The Jewish Alliance for Law & Social Action (JALSA) was founded in 2001 by a circle of former American Jewish Congress members and allies who were committed to preserving a vehicle to continue a passionate pursuit of economic and social justice for all which “derives authentically from the Jewish tradition and deserves full and energetic expression in our own time.”

Thinking about this article, I polled JALSA board members on the possible wellsprings of their efforts in pursuit of social justice. Foundations for some were religious, for others historical, for some political. Several talked of a “mandate” that they felt emanated from their Jewish roots or an “imprinting” they absorbed as a child to change a troubled world for the better, and this held true regardless of whether they are religiously observant in formal ways. Others said that justice and service have always been major teachings of our faith, in the Torah, Talmud, etc., as exemplified by two scriptural commands we cite frequently in JALSA communications: “Justice, justice, shall you pursue” (Deuteronomy 16:20) and “It is not incumbent upon you to complete the work, but neither are you at liberty to desist from it” (Rabbi Tarfon, Pirkei Avot 2:21).

There is a notion that G-d established a covenant with Noah and all living things after the great flood, that Jews have accepted a responsibility for the stewardship of the world and that the Lord

would not deliver such a devastating flood again if we fulfilled this obligation. There is the concept of Tikkun Olam, or “repair of the world,” that says we must work to perfect the world. Some interpret this to mean that Jews are not only responsible for creating a model society among themselves but also for the welfare of the society at large. This is expressed in multiple places in the Torah, including in Leviticus as “You shall treat the stranger who resides with you no differently than the natives born among you, have the same love for him as for yourself; for you too were once strangers in the land of Egypt.”

***In “Justice, justice, shall you pursue” the operative word is pursue - not hope for, think about or observe - but pursue.***

According to the Talmud, Rabbi Hillel famously captured the essence of Jewish teaching with a version of the Golden Rule, saying, “That which is hateful to you, do not do to your neighbor. That is the whole Torah; the rest is commentary. Go and study it.” Some Jews believe that the performing of daily “mitzvot,” i.e. commandments or good deeds, is necessary for the coming of the Messiah, the more mitzvot being done, the sooner the Messianic Age will arrive.

A large percentage of JALSA members are attorneys. Their dedication to our work seems consistent with the following of Torah, which itself is known as the Written Law of the Jewish people. JALSA’s Committee on

Law and Social Action has met weekly for decades to review and discuss possible advocacy and action by JALSA, defending the rights of minorities, promoting equal opportunity in employment and education, upholding religious freedom and protecting Constitutional guarantees for all Americans.

Having a stake in each other’s wellbeing is an enduring theme of JALSA’s history; our use of coalitions to achieve change reflects the strength and advantages of communal vs. individual action. We have responded to violations of civil rights and civil liberties and assaults on the dignity and economic security of those of other nationalities, skin colors, religions and sexual identities. Our members provided early support to people with HIV/AIDS. We monitor and contest budgets and legislation that impact the vulnerable. We have organized legal clinics for those facing foreclosure or eviction.

From the breadth of materials in our ancient texts and history, clearly people can pull out different principles to guide their lives. Within the Jewish community, for example, we see contrasting positions on the role of government interventions to address social challenges vs. emphasis on personal responsibility to make the world better. To me there is a progressive exhortation to protect the vulnerable and make our communities more just. As a JALSA board member aptly pointed out, in “Justice, justice, shall you pursue” the operative word is pursue - not hope for, think about or observe - but pursue.

*Sheila Decter is Executive Director of JALSA.*

## We, The Students, Report from the 2010 NLG Convention...

We began conspiring to get ourselves to New Orleans on our first day of law school orientation. We didn't really know each other, but we knew the National Lawyers Guild and that we wanted to be a part of it. As activists in our home communities, Guild attorneys had not only represented many of our friends and allies in struggle, their examples had convinced us to go to law school in the first place. We had taken their advice, yet remained skeptical and nervous about the journey ahead. One of the few things that we did feel sure about was that we would have a home in the Guild.

And so, three weeks and one fundraising party later, we skipped our afternoon civil procedure class and boarded a plane to the convention. Our only regret was that we didn't skip torts, too, and make an earlier flight.

The NLG Convention was, for us, affirming, challenging, and life-giving. We found ourselves amongst the practitioners that we dream of becoming, practitioners who were excited to meet us, excited to welcome us into the Guild, and eager to share their work and wisdom with us.

We were challenged to question what it means to "think like a lawyer" when the law itself seems designed to perpetuate injustice rather than further the common good. If the first year of law school tries to set out the "rules," the convention taught us to think outside the box and look for useful law

wherever we can find it. Creativity will take us places formulaic application never could! We heard presentations by lawyers and organizers who are re-envisioning the struggle of immigrant workers as not simply a labor contract issue, but as a 13th amendment issue—making workers rights a constitutional question of involuntary servitude. We heard from an attorney who is actually trying to harness the hurdles of *Iqbal* for good by including a citizens' tribunal report in a

engaged in a cooperative struggle for justice, came together to share it with an even wider audience.

We heard rumors and murmurs of notable members of the Guild, of the groundbreaking cases they litigated and the other landmark occasions in People's History in which the organization took part. We were heartened and inspired to hear about these historic people and moments and wanted to learn more. In fact, after we returned we organized a "History of NLG" event for our school chapter.

We also learned about the "Alabama Manifesto" and the Guild's own struggle to improve and challenge itself to embody the equality and inclusiveness that it seeks on the global scale.

Most importantly, we left the Convention with a greater sense of community and hope. Friday's plenary session on the importance of labor in the 21st century left us



Northeastern students (and a baby) with Mass Chapter staff and officers at a pre-banquet reception. (Photo by Sebastian Sokolowski)

complaint concerning police brutality at political demonstrations in Puerto Rico.

We saw how the law exists in its inter-disciplinary, complex, multi-faceted glory. How a client's or movement's legal needs rarely fit into the neat categories of our law school curriculum but rather involve the intersection of many fields. Labor law, criminal law, and immigration law may all have bearing on a single case. With that comes the importance of working together, something we saw so much of in Guild practice. Legal workers and community organizers, scholars and attorneys,

astounded, by both the amount of work that still needs to be done and the energy of the Guild to do it. In this economy especially, it is easy to feel redundant in law school. The Convention, however, reminded us that in the struggle to prioritize human rights over property interests, there is always room for more feet on the ground. Which side are you on? For us, there's no question.

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*Stephanie Gharakhanian and Sharlyn Grace are 1st year students at Northeastern University School of Law.*

## NLG Massachusetts Chapter Sustainers

In the spring of 2003, the Massachusetts Chapter of the NLG initiated the Chapter Sustainer Program. Since its inception, the Program has been very successful and has been enthusiastically joined by the following Guild members:

**Adkins, Kelston & Zavez • Anonymous • Michael Avery • Susan Barney & Kamal Ahmed • Samuel Berk • Neil Berman • Howard Cooper • Barb Dougan • Robert Doyle • Melinda Drew & Jeff Feuer • Carolyn Federoff • Roger Geller • Lee Goldstein & Shelley Kroll • Benjie Hiller • Stephen Hrones • Martin Kantrovitz • Nancy Kelly & John Willshire-Carrera • David Kelston • Leslee Klein & Mark Stern • Petrucelly, Nadler & Norris • Hank Phillippi Ryan & Jonathan Shapiro • Allan Rodgers • Martin Rosenthal • Sharryn Ross • Anne Sills & Howard Silverman • Judy Somberg • Stern, Shapiro, Weissberg & Garin**

The Sustainer Program is one of the most important Chapter initiatives to secure its future existence. Please consider joining the Program.

## YES, INCLUDE MY NAME AMONG NLG MASSACHUSETTS CHAPTER SUSTAINERS!

I, \_\_\_\_\_, am making a commitment to support the Massachusetts Chapter of the Guild with an annual contribution of:  
\_\_\_\_\_ \$500 (not including my membership dues)  
\$ \_\_\_\_\_ (other above \$500)

### As a sustainer I will receive:

- special listing in the Dinner Program;
- 1/8 page ad in the Dinner Program;
- acknowledgement in every issue of *Mass Dissent*;
- two (2) free raffle tickets for a Holiday Party raffle;
- invitation to special events.

### Three ways to become a sustainer:

- contribute \$500 or more a year (not including dues)
- pair up with another person and pay \$250 each, or
- join the "Guild Circle" and pay \$50/month minimum.

*Please mail to:* NLG, Massachusetts Chapter  
14 Beacon St., Suite 407, Boston, MA 02108

## Nat'l NLG Convention - Legal Worker Award to Urszula Masny-Latos

The rumors are true -- Urszula is Polish. And as you'd expect, Urszula was involved in politics in Poland. In 1976 she had just taken her university entrance exams when riots triggered by increased food prices were met with increasingly harsh government repression. Urszula joined an underground committee in defense of workers, cleverly hiding the group's newspapers under son Sebastian's crib mattress.

When *Solidarnosc* (Solidarity) was formed in 1980, Urszula and her former husband were active in the student branch. But by 1981, they needed a break and planned to leave Poland for a year. They obtained Italian tourist visas but sought political asylum in Vienna. They spent three months as political refugees until a Michigan church agreed to sponsor their petition for U.S. citizenship.

NBC News interviewed Urszula for a story on Austria's refugee crisis.

Of course the crew was smitten with this fiery *ladna dziewczyna* (cutie pie). She invited them -- and half the local village -- to the family's going-away party, complete with a DJ and plenty of vodka. Urszula eventually starred in an NBC propaganda piece, although NBC forgot to mention that Urszula and her then-husband were socialists.

When Poland closed its borders, they decided to stay in the U.S. After earning a degree in the sociology of law, Urszula was awarded a Fulbright Scholarship to study back in Poland. In Kraków, she became involved with *Fundacja eFKa* (The Women's Foundation). Contrary to Fulbright rules, she helped organize against the ban on abortion. *Niektóre rzeczy nigdy sie nie zmieniaja*. (Some things never change.) After organizing a film festival for Polish and American women directors, she decided to switch her focus to arts management.

Upon her return to the U.S., Urszula earned a Masters in non-profit management. While acting as business director for an Eastern European theater company in New York, she also translated materials for UNITE, a union that was organizing in New England. That led to a year in Boston and naturally, a return to Urszula's old organizing ways. During this time she met Massachusetts NLG members. In 1996, the chapter needed a new executive director, Urszula applied -- and the rest is herstory.

No, some things never change -- thank goodness. During her 14 years with the Massachusetts chapter, Urszula's revolutionary fervor has never dimmed. And she can still out-party the rest of us. You go, *odwazna kobieto* (gurrrrl).

*Convention Banquet program bio by  
Barb Dougan*

# Mass Dissent

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## The National Lawyers Guild is...



" ... an association dedicated to the need for basic change in the structure of our political and economic system. We seek to unite the lawyers, law students, legal workers and jailhouse lawyers of America in an organization which shall function as an effective political and social force in the service of people, to the end that human rights shall be regarded as more sacred than property interests. Our aim is to bring together all those who regard adjustments to new conditions as more important than the veneration of precedent; who recognize the importance of safeguarding and extending the rights of workers, women, farmers, and minority groups upon whom the welfare of the entire nation depends; who seek actively to eliminate racism; who work to maintain and protect our civil rights and liberties in the face of persistent attacks upon them; and who look upon the law as an instrument for the protection of the people, rather than for their repression."

*Preamble to the Constitution of the National Lawyers Guild, originally adopted February 22, 1937, and most recently amended in July 1971.*

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14 Beacon St., Suite 407, Boston, MA 02108

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**I am interested in working on the following projects:**

- \_\_\_\_ Lawyer Referral Service
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- \_\_\_\_ *Mass Dissent* (monthly publication)
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Dues are calculated on a calendar year basis (Jan.1-Dec.31) according to your income\*:

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over \$30,000 to \$40,000 . . . . .	\$150
over \$40,000 to \$50,000 . . . . .	\$200
over \$50,000 to \$60,000 . . . . .	\$250
over \$60,000 to \$70,000 . . . . .	\$300
over \$70,000 to \$80,000 . . . . .	\$350
over \$80,000 to \$90,000 . . . . .	\$400
over \$100,000 . . . . .	\$500

\* Any **new** member who joins after September 1 will be carried over to the following year. Dues may be paid in full or in quarterly installments. Dues of \$80 cover the basic membership costs, which include publication and mailing of *Mass Dissent* (the Chapter's monthly newsletter), national and regional dues, and the office and staff.

*No one will be denied membership because of inability to pay.*